

From: bounce-246614-2980544@lists.tesol.org on behalf of [Deborah Sams](#)
To: [ESOL in Elementary Education IS E-List](#)
Subject: [eeis-l] summary of responses for modifications and grading for ELLs (long)
Date: Tuesday, March 03, 2009 9:16:07 AM

A lot of people have requested a summary of responses to the question on modifications and grading for ELLs. Due to a high number of requests, I'll post the summary in this email for convenience sake. This post contains a summary of responses from four listservs, reflecting practices from across the country (and Canada). The last section includes a copy sent from Saddlebrook Public Schools. It is a comprehensive document and I thank them for giving their blessing to share it with others.

Since this a long post, please delete the text if you click reply to avoid perpetuating even longer posts.

Best regards,

Deborah Sams
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Modifications

General comments

This is a common, ongoing problem in many areas; therefore, teacher training must be constant and ongoing.
Classroom teachers need support and help with modifying instruction for ELLs.
ESL teachers need time in their schedules to support classroom teachers.

How districts communicate modifications to teachers

Supervisors/coordinators tell principals at meetings that classroom teachers must follow modification plans. This is also shared at staff meetings.
As principals do 'walk throughs' during the day, they should observe teachers to see if they are modifying and differentiating instruction. They need training to recognize if this is happening during their observations.

Each ESL teacher in our district creates a service plan for each ESL student. A copy is given to the teacher and is signed by all teachers, principal, and counselor if needed. Each year a new plan is created. On this plan are goals for the student and a checklist of accommodations/ modifications the student is entitled to receive. The report states if grades are modified or not.

[Stickers placed on report cards that say something like "modified instruction."](#)

We publish an ESOL Handbook each year. The manual details modifications and explains that teachers need to make these. We slot accommodations checklists with suggestions for individual students. Teachers need to sign off on these, and they go into

the individual student files at the district office.

Grading

Standards based 1-4 scale

We are adopting a standards based reporting system (1-4 scale)... We have recently decided to modify our rubrics to include the words "in grade level texts" in levels 3 (grade level) and 4 (above) to report more fairly on our students' performances in reading.

Writing will continue to be assessed as it has been - we use a 6-point analytical rubric similar to the 6+1 model. The idea of including the words "in grade level texts" for levels 3 and 4 is so that our students who are ELL or have an IEP would not have a grade that is similar to their peers if they are reading modified materials, that is, below grade level. The ELLs and students with an IEP will have a progress report devised by our department to report progress in the four language domains. These reports will be completed by the classroom teacher in collaboration with the ELL Teacher.

Pass/fail and Number grades

ESOL students can receive a letter grade when they reach a letter grade of C or better. Until then they can be graded with a P/F. If they are only in the class to be acclimated to American culture (and speak no English) they can receive an audit (no grade). They can get an effort and citizenship grade. If there are questions it should be addressed with the ESOL teacher. If there is an F this needs to be agreed upon by the ESOL teacher. (If a student is not trying intentionally). I send out the e-mail at each quarter before grading. I also discuss and remind teachers at team meetings. I pass out and discuss strategies. Any modified curriculum work that we do I pass along to the teacher of that subject. (Some teachers love that because they need something to justify giving a P--and I can understand that.

For our level 1 and 2 kids, content teachers have the option to give a pass/fail instead of a number grade although this doesn't happen that often because we place these students in specific courses depending on their English proficiency level. For example, because we don't have sheltered content classes for ELL students, like history or science, level 1 and 2 kids take many electives first. Classes like art, food, and gym fit well with their math and ELL classes. The content teachers and ELL teachers become familiar with the modifications for each class. When the students are level 3 they begin to take science and history classes, but still need extra support and modifications. Again, the modifications can vary with each student. It takes a lot of work, but I'm finding the more familiar our content teachers are with our ELL population and ELL in general, the better their modifications are coming along.

Statements on grade cards to indicate ESL services

Report cards for students receiving ESL services must include a statement each grading period indicating that they are receiving ESL services. It states that the student is making satisfactory progress in the ESL program, but has not yet met grade level expectations language arts. There is a statement available for each subject area that states that grades are based on instruction and assessments that

were adapted to meet the needs of an ESL student. These statements are used as needed after the classroom teacher and ESL teacher have conferred. There are other statements that indicate the ability of the student to use English language skills to participate in general classroom instruction, with various levels of support from the ESL teacher. Teachers collaborate to select the statements for each child that best reflect his/her situation.

The ESL students receive the same type of grades as everyone else: O, G, S, or N in the lower grades and traditional letter grades in the upper grades. There are separate grades given for effort and behavior.

Upper elementary through secondary receive numerical grades that correspond to a letter grade. There are comments on report cards indicating that "language learning is in progress, so grade has been adjusted for ESOL" for those teachers who are not happy about giving grades that don't meet "standard" yet.

ESOL progress report forms

We also monitor interim and quarter grades. We have an ESOL Progress Report form. At the elementary level, ESOL teachers slot these to teachers every time a report card goes out. At middle and secondary levels, however, most of us get copies of the report cards and only slot these forms to teachers who have awarded a grade below 77. We remind teachers what the English language level is of the student we are referring to and ask about accommodations.

Dealing with failures / supporting both teacher and ESL student

If a student fails a mainstream class, the teacher needs to document the reasons why. This goes in the permanent record. They cannot fail a student for lack of language ability. This is spelled out in the manual.

I also help to ride herd on my students... If I see a pattern, I go to guidance counselors and ask them to speak to the students. In that way, if there is a problem, they have advocates.

The students I serve often tell me that they're struggling and ask me to talk to teachers. Two of my beginners are in the same teacher's class. One of the students is a hard worker, so she was concerned about her grade. I e-mailed the teacher, reminding him that the students were at the "pre-functional level," and asked what accommodations he was making. We e-mailed back and forth, and he just sent me his tests, asking me to help him modify them. I'll do that, knowing that he'll be able to use these on other ELLs in the future. Teachers at my school are very interested in doing the best job teaching my students.

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- Along with the issuance of a traditional school-issued report card, each ELL and his parent(s) shall be issued a mid-cycle progress report four times a year as well as an ESL report card at the end of each quarter, detailing the ELL's progress in specific skill areas to that date, including narrative notes written by the ESL teacher.
- If an ELL is capable of earning a "C" or better on our traditional grading scales, then the earned letter grade(s) should be issued to the ELL. Otherwise, an ELL should be issued a passing grade of "P" (instead of a "D") if he demonstrates basic understanding of the subject matter, even if his ability to express his understanding in clear and accurate English is limited. If the student's limited English proficiency prevents even basic understanding of subject matter, then the student shall be issued a grade of "LB," representing "language barrier."
- A high school ELL who earns a final grade of "P" or better for a given course will earn credit toward graduation for that course, but courses for which an ELL has earned a final grade of "P" shall not be included in tabulation of the ELL's grade point average nor class rank. For the purpose of final grade tabulation, each "P" earned across the marking periods for a given course for which an ELL has been in attendance shall count as the numerical average earned by the ELL for each respective "P." If the ELL's final numerical average is between 65 and 69, then the teacher shall issue a final grade of "P." If the final numerical average is 70 or greater, then the corresponding letter grade shall be issued to the ELL. Prior to the issuance of a final grade of "P," the assigned number and appellation for that course will be altered to reflect that the student passed with significant modifications for an ESL student. For example, the transcript of an ELL who earns a "P" in US History I would actually read ESL US History I.
- A high school ELL who has not demonstrated at least minimal understanding of a subject shall be issued a final grade of "AU," signifying that the student attended but audited the class and, therefore, earned no credit. In such a case, the ELL would have to repeat the audited course in order to earn credit for that course. Note that an elementary or middle school ELL who has not demonstrated at least minimal understanding of a subject should be issued a final grade of "LB."
- In general, an ELL's promotion from one grade to the next shall be contingent upon the same promotion guidelines set for by the Board of Education for promotion of regular education students. However, the ELL's building principal, ESL teacher, and guidance counselor, if applicable, will also confer with the student's parent(s) to review and consider the student's academic progress and level of language acquisition over the course of the school year.

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